

Copies of the Dewan's Address in English, Malayalam and Tamil were distributed to the members, as also copies of the Administration Report of the State for 1099, in English and Malayalam, of the report on the operations of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for 1099, in English and Malayalam, of the "Statistics of Travancore" for 1099 in English and of the Memoranda of subjects in English, Malayalam and Tamil.

The Dewan announced that Mr. C. W. E. Cotton C. I. E., I. C. S., Agent to the Governor-General, Madras States, had written to say that he regretted his inability to attend the meeting, and that Sir P. Rajagopalachari and Dewan Bahadur Mr. M. Krishnan Nayar, former Dewans of the State, had sent their greetings to the Assembly.

The Dewan then opened the session with the following

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE SRI MULAM POPULAR ASSEMBLY,

For the first time in the history of this institution, it is our misfortune to-day to meet under the shadow of a national bereavement. His Highness Sri Mfilan Tirunâl, to whose large-hearted statesmanship this Assembly owes its being, has been removed from our midst by the inscrutable hand of Providence, and the country bemoans the loss of one who combined a saintly personality with the rare qualities of a great ruler, who, for well-nigh forty years, guided the destinies of this land with an unerring instinct, and who has rightly come to be revered by his devoted subjects as 'Râjarshi' and 'the Father of his people.' It is the province of the historian to recount the unique part played by His Highness the late Maha Raja in the moulding of modern Travancore. His life, as Lecky said of that of Queen Victoria, was a most harmonious whole, in which mind and character were happily attuned 'like perfect music set to noble words'; and he has left behind him a name which will serve as an inspiration and an example for many generations to come. His Highness the young Maha Raja, who has ascended the historic *musnad* of his ancestors, bids fair, by the remarkable intelligence and urbanity which he displays, to become a worthy successor in due time to His Highness the late lamented Maha Raja, his great-grand-uncle. During the minority of His Highness, the control of the State has happily vested in Her Highness the Maha Rani Regent, the Senior Rani of the Ruling family, who is so well known for her great gifts, wide sympathies and high ideals. Under the gracious command of Her Highness, it is my privilege to welcome you to the twenty-first session of this Assembly.

2. Copies of the Administration Report for the year 1099 M. E. have already been placed in your hands, from which you will learn in detail of the work and progress of the several departments of the State during that year. As you are aware, the policy that I decided to adopt in the conduct of the administration, with the approval of His Highness the late Maha Raja was roughly outlined in my address to the members of the seventeenth session of the Assembly, and it has been my endeavour in subsequent years to carry out that policy as far as circumstances have permitted and subject to such modifications in detail as have been considered necessary in the light of subsequent experience. In the present address, I propose to present a brief résumé of the results of that endeavour, and, in so doing, to indicate some of the lines on which future activities should proceed.

MATERIAL AND MORAL PROGRESS.

3. **Assignment of Land.** Another year's working of the Land Assignment Regulation, III of 1097, and of the Puduval Rules issued under Section 7 thereof, goes to confirm the conviction that the new provisions are effectively serving the objects for which they have been introduced, namely, prevention of speculation in land, securing to the *bona fide* occupant and improver of land the fruits of his labour, and equalisation of opportunities for all alike of obtaining land for cultivation. The total area registered rose from 7,659 acres in 1098 to 7,955

acres in 1699. The large bulk of *puduvai* registries during 1099 related to small blocks of land occupied by *bona fide* cultivators, and as many as 6,511 acres, forming 82 per cent. of the total area registered under the Puduval Rules, were lands of this description and were registered without auction. The areas sold by auction, after sub-division into conveniently small blocks, would have been much larger but for the continued stringency of the money market; but, as I said in my last year's address, this is not a matter for regret, since land is the greatest of national assets and should not be parted with in a hurry under circumstances which do not ensure its being put to immediate and proper use. With a view to prevent the indiscriminate registry of large blocks of unoccupied lands known as minor circuits and to divide them into blocks of conveniently small size, susceptible of acquisition, by purchase in auction or otherwise, by men of ordinary means, a temporary *puduval* survey staff was created in 1096 to undertake the survey of such blocks which abounded in twelve interior taluks of the State. This staff worked in full strength for about a year and a half and surveyed over 80,000 acres or 125 square miles. As it was then found that the area surveyed was adequate for meeting all immediate requirements, the strength and operations of the staff were considerably circumscribed in 1098, and the functions of the reduced staff were mainly restricted in 1099 to correction work in the field and the completion of office processes of the survey already done. It is now found that, in six of the twelve taluks already referred to, *viz.*, Vilavankod, Kottarakara, Pattanapuram, Kunnattur, Muvattupuzha and Pattanamtitta, there is necessity for the further survey of minor circuit blocks, and it has accordingly been decided to depute, from the normal staff of the Survey Department, a surveyor to each of these taluks to work under the Taluk Tahsildar, subject to the professional control of the Superintendent of Survey.

4. As I stated in my address last year, an all-round reduction in the rates of valuation of the reserved trees standing on *puduval* lands was sanctioned in 1099, and trees of less than 36 inches girth have been ordered to be entirely left out in the calculation of tree-value. This substantial reduction in the rates of *tadivila* will, it is trusted, afford additional facility to the people for securing land for the extension of cultivation.

5. **Lands to Depressed Classes.** Five years ago, the depressed classes in Travancore owned no lands worth mentioning and the few lands registered in their names were being exploited by capitalists of other communities. The Land Assignment Regulation was passed for the express purpose of preventing the exploitation of lands given to members of the depressed classes on concessional terms, and the Puduval Rules were so revised as to remove the obstacles that lay in the way of the acquisition of Government lands by these communities. Ever since the adoption of these measures, the Land Revenue Department has been bestowing some attention on the registry of lands in favour of members of the depressed classes for habitation and cultivation, and it is found that, during a period of about four years ending with Vrischikam, 1100, an area of 1,446 acres has been assigned to them. The area so far registered, however, is altogether too small to meet the legitimate needs of these communities numbering nearly four lakhs; and I have to repeat that the progress made in this direction is very unsatisfactory and that the efforts of the revenue officers cannot but be characterised as half-hearted. The Registrar of Co-operative Societies has now been appointed the Protector of the Depressed Classes and entrusted with the specific duty of watching their interests, and Government expect better results to follow from this arrangement. The concessions enjoyed by individual members of the depressed classes in the matter of land assignment under Rules 24 to 27 of the Puduval Rules have, at the instance of this officer, been extended to co-operative societies composed exclusively of such members and the maximum area that may be assigned to each such society without auction and payment of *taravila* has been fixed at 30 acres. Other facilities have also been created for such co-operative societies under the Land Colonisation Rules, to which reference will soon be made. It is hoped that the Protector of the Depressed Classes will see that the utmost possible advantage is taken of all these facilities.